

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-10 AID-05 IGA-01

MC-02 CIEP-02 EB-07 /088 W
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6995

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 2348

TOKYO FOR AMBASSADOR SAXBE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IN US PK

SUBJECT: INDIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS CHAVAN'S STATEMENT ON HIS
VISIT TO US AND ARMS TO PAKISTAN

REF: NEW DELHI 2268

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN'S EXTEMPORANEOUS
STATEMENTS IN BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT ABOUT HIS UPCOMING
WASHINGTON VISIT AND THE REPORTED US DECISION TO RESUME ARMS
SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN RECEIVED TOP NEWS PLAY IN THE INDIAN NEWSPAPERS
APPEARING FEB 19. THE PRESS COVERAGE WAS PRECEDED BY EXTENSIVE
RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE FEB 18 NIGHT. END SUMMARY.

1. LEADING NEWSPAPERS PROMINENTLY HIGHLIGHTED, BOTH IN HEADLINES
AND NEWS CONTENTS, THAT MR. CHAVAN MAY DROP US VISIT. THREE
DAILIES ACCORDED THE STORY THE LEAD NEWS SPOTS WITH FRONT-PAGE
HEADLINES: "CHAVAN MAY DROP VISIT TO USA" (STATESMAN);
"CHAVAN MAY DROP US VISIT" (TIMES OF INDIA), AND "CHAVAN'S
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VISIT TO US IN MARCH UNCERTAIN" (INDIAN EXPRESS).

2. OTHER NEWSPAPERS RAN BOX ITEMS: "UNCERTAINTY OVER VISIT" (HINDUSTAN TIMES); "CHAVAN NOT SURE OF US VISIT" (NATIONAL HERALD) AND "CHAVAN'S US TRIP IN DOUBT" (PATRIOT).

3. WRITTEN BY THEIR PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENTS, THE DISPATCHES WERE EXTENSIVE, CONTINUING ON INSIDE PAGES. MANY REPORTS CARRIED COMMENTS. THE INDIAN EXPRESS REPORTED THAT THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT "CREATED A STIR" AND THE CANCELLATION OF HIS VISIT WILL "INDIRECTLY EXPRESS" INDIA'S "DISPLEASURE" OVER THE REPORTED US DECISION. ACCORDING TO THE STATESMAN, THE CANCELLATION OF THE VISIT WILL BE "A MAJOR SET-BACK" FOR INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. HE ADDED: "OBSERVERS HERE ARE STILL HOPEFUL THAT THE US ADMINISTRATION WILL HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS IN THE MATTER." THE HINDUSTAN TIMES DECLARED THAT "MR. CHAVAN'S REMARKS...SEEM TO HAVE CAST A SPELL OF UNCERTAINTY" ON HIS VISIT TO THE US. THE PATRIOT REPORTED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER "HAS RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON."

4. ANOTHER POINT UNDERSCORED IN THE HEADLINES EXPRESSED INDIA'S CONCERN OVER THE REPORTED PAKISTAN OFFER OF A NAVAL BASE TO THE US. THE CONGRESS PARTY-ORIENTED NATIONAL HERALD LED FRONT-PAGE WITH THIS HEADLINE: "US ANGLING FOR BASE IN PAKISTAN?" PAGE ONE HEADLINE IN THE HINDUSTAN TIMES READ: "CHAVAN FEELS PAK MAY GIVE US NAVAL BASE." THE STATESMAN CORRESPONDENT WROTE: "THE BELIEF IS GROWING HERE THAT AN INFORMAL DECISION FAVORING PAKISTAN WITH LETHAL WEAPONS MAY ALREADY HAVE BEEN TAKEN. IF THIS IS SO, IT IS A SERIOUS ADVERSE DEVELOPMENT, PUTTING INDO-US RELATIONS INTO JEOPARDY ON THE ONE HAND, AND NULLIFYING THE MOVES MADE BY NEW DELHI AND ISLAMABAD TO NORMALIZE THEIR RELATIONS." THE NATIONAL HERALD CORRESPONDENT NOTED THAT "THE ISSUE OF RENEWED AMERICAN ARMS FLOW INTO PAKISTAN GAINED A SHARPER AND MORE SINISTER DIMENSION" WITH THE STATEMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

5. NEWS DISPATCHES USED EXTENSIVE QUOTES FROM MR. CHAVAN'S STATEMENT, REPORTED REF. CABLE.

6. EDITORIAL COMMENTS ARE EXPECTED FEB 20.SCHNEIDER

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Disposition History: n/a
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